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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Reports provided by specialized agencies of the United Nations on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

1. On behalf of the Committee, the Secretariat invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), on 5 May 1998, to submit to the Committee by 20 May 1998 a report on information provided by States to FAO on the implementation of article 14 and related articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would supplement the information contained in the reports of those States parties to the Convention that will be considered at the nineteenth session. Annexed to the present note are country briefs prepared by FAO on Nigeria, Panama, Peru, the Republic of Korea and the United Republic of Tanzania.

2. Other information sought by the Committee refers to activities, programmes and policy decisions undertaken by FAO to promote the implementation of article 14 and related articles of the Convention.

3. The report annexed hereto has been submitted in compliance with the Committee's requests.

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Annex

Country briefs prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for the nineteenth session of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Nigeria

Agriculture

Agriculture is an important sector of the Nigerian economy, and although it produces only 35 per cent of the gross domestic product, it employs two thirds of the labour force.[1] The backbone of the agricultural sector is constituted by smallholders, of which women constitute the majority.

The strategies to be pursued in achieving growth in the agricultural sector include the following:

(a) Enhancement of the agricultural development programmes;

(b) Establishment of employment-oriented agricultural programme to check the rising level of unemployment, especially among the youth;

(c) Completion of ongoing irrigation projects of river basin development authorities and maintenance of existing dams.

Accordingly, the Government intends to invest heavily in agriculture in order to produce more food and increase the income of farmers. Further, the Government will help the small-scale farmers to have access to farming equipment through the provisions of animal traction, hand tools and small-scale irrigation equipment. In addition, the commodity exchange market project will take place in 1997 so as to enable farmers to obtain better prices for their farm produce.

Role of women in agriculture

In Nigeria, women play a vital role in the production, preparation, preservation and distribution of food supplies. Indeed, women comprise between 60 and 80 per cent of the agricultural labour force,[2] depending on the region, and produce two thirds of the country's food crops. However, past development plans and extension services have focused on men and their farm production needs.

Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women

Female farmers are invisible in the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies and projects. Up until the mid-1980s the agricultural development programmes had contained only a home economics division responsible for home-related women's activities. The Nigeria women in agriculture project was introduced to address this shortcoming in the extension system. Through a participatory approach, the project has succeeded in giving women a voice in the national policy reform process and in integrating women into the mainstream of agricultural extension and development initiatives in their localities.

Existing home economics agents have been retrained to become women-in-agriculture agents. The formation of women-in-agriculture farmers' groups has facilitated the dissemination of agricultural innovations and provided women farmers with better access to farm inputs and credit than they would have as individuals. Assisted by women-in-agriculture agents, through these groups, women now participate in all aspects of sub-projects, from identification to planning and implementation.

Project planning and replanning has been carried out through national workshops with representatives of women-in-agriculture groups, a process that has been found to be effective in translating field knowledge into specific action for improving women's productivity in agriculture.

Access to agricultural resources

Marketing outlets. In many cases, the main obstacle for rural women in raising production above the family's subsistence needs is the lack of a marketing outlet, which is more problematic for women than for men. Women farmers face problems in marketing their produce owing to the fact that they have little or no access to formal marketing channels; to the extra barriers they face as small farmers, related to state licensing requirements; to insufficient working capital; to lack of transportation facilities, and to limited access to more lucrative markets. Studies have shown that market opportunities and transport facilities can stimulate women farmers to produce food surpluses. Equal participation of women farmers in production and marketing cooperatives plays a significant role in encouraging women farmers to produce surpluses for markets and improving the household income and the food security situation. Furthermore, women need training in marketing, accounting and management skills.

Land. As a result of the land tenure system, farmers generally have access to fragmented plots of land for their

farming activities. Women have limited access to land, while men comprise 87 per cent of landholders. Shortage of good quality farming land has become a critical issue for smallholders. Women, in general, have much smaller farms and are faced with decreasing quality of plots. They thus have an exceptionally difficult task in maintaining levels of output and household food security. As pressure on land increases and efforts to improve agricultural productivity intensify, it will be even more important to ensure that women have access to and control over adequate land.

Credit. The most problematic aspect of women's customary land rights is lack of security, as secure land rights are important with regard to access to credit and membership in rural organizations. Rural women's limited incomes, lack of collateral, higher levels of illiteracy and lack of information constrain their access to almost all forms of credit. The assumption that loans must generate sufficient returns for repayment eliminate the possibility of credit for the subsistence sector. However, the latter can be boosted by making credit available to small-scale farmers, and this often generates a surplus which is sold in the local markets. This situation is a serious impediment to improving household food security and family welfare. Women's productivity in subsistence activity could be greatly improved by the introduction of new technology, but this is hampered by their apparent credit unworthiness, precisely because their main responsibility centres on subsistence produce.

Impact of structural adjustment programmes

Increasing attention has been paid to the negative impact of structural adjustment policies on rural women, and, therefore, on the food security situation. Under structural adjustment policies, large-scale farming and commercial crop production are promoted, and the subsistence sector is neglected. As a consequence, resources (land, labour, inputs) have been reallocated from subsistence production to the production of export crops. The implications of this shift are numerous, especially for women, who are concentrated in the subsistence sector. At the same time, reduced government involvement in such areas as marketing and pricing of subsistence agriculture leaves farmers responsible for areas in which they have no experience or training. In addition, structural adjustment policies generally involve reduced government expenditures on social services such as education, health and rural infrastructure, which means that further demands are made on women's time and energy to make up for shortcomings in these areas.[3]

Policy planning

The significant contributions of women farmers are seldom taken into account. Planners and policy makers rely almost exclusively on official marketing statistics, which overlook the importance of local markets for local food security, where women play a major role. Surplus food production by women is not taken into consideration because women are under-represented in marketing cooperatives, which often require land ownership or official head-of-household status as a condition for membership. The lack of gender disaggregated data does not allow an evaluation of women's economic contribution. It also facilitates the exclusion of women farmers by planners from policies and support programmes.

Recommendations

- Development policies and planning need to take into consideration the roles, responsibilities and needs of women food producers;
- Gender-disaggregated agricultural statistical data is a critical prerequisite for any changes in current development policies;
- Socio-economic and gender awareness and sensitization training should be made available to planners, policy makers and researchers in agricultural issues, focusing on practical tools to rectify current gender biases in planning, policy-making, agricultural research and extension delivery;
- Agricultural extension programmes urgently need to reorient their services to support the majority of the agricultural labour force: women farmers;
- Extension workers should be retrained to strengthen their skills to work with women farmers;
- Rural financing systems, adjustment of national credit and financial policies, and improved technology are required to increase women farmers' productivity;
- Access to marketing opportunities, land and credit should be made available to women farmers in order to increase their productivity.

Panama

Agriculture

In Panama, poverty affects 75 per cent of the rural population.[4] The causes identified for this phenomenon are as follows:

(a) Concentration of land among few landholders (70 per cent of the land belongs to 6 per cent of the farmers);[5] degradation of the natural resources as the result of inefficient use of land, population pressure on land and consequent expansion into less fertile land;

(b) Decline in productivity;

(c) Limited access to productive resources like credit, marketing outputs, training and extension services.

Women in agriculture

Women are affected by the situation in the agricultural sector more than men. Indeed, rural women encounter more constraints than men in carrying out productive activities. They have limited access to land (between 1988 and 1993 women owned only 28 per cent of the land);[6] limited access to productive resources; and a labour market which discriminates against them (in 1992, their wages were 24 per cent lower than those of men for the same amount of work).[5] In addition to facing these restrictions in the field of productive activities, women are also responsible for reproductive and domestic duties. This double burden has serious consequences for female-headed households, leading to increased poverty among rural women.

Women in decision-making positions

In Panama, education indicators for women are much higher than those for men,[7] but the rate of women's participation and the number of management posts held by women in public and private organizations fail to reflect this.

Efforts to promote the advancement of women

Given the immediate need to address the critical agricultural situation, the national plan for development (1995-1999) has identified as principal priorities the concentration of institutional efforts towards the amelioration of social services (health, education) and increased levels of production, employment and income for the rural population. The fundamental objectives of the development plan are economic growth, environmental sustainability and the achievement of social and economic gender equality.

Legal status of women

It is possible to summarize the status of rural women in Panama as follows: although the Constitutional Law lays down an overriding principle of equality of all citizens regardless of sex, race or social position, putting the legislation into effect is an enormous problem. Furthermore, laws which allow for the "*potestad marital*" (the body of rights that the law confers on the husband over the person and property of his wife) still exist today, notwithstanding the recent reforms of the Civil Code eliminating most of the discriminatory laws against women. Consequently, the woman's capacity to administer her property is diminished.[8]

Access to productive resources

Land. The most common way for rural women to gain access to land is through succession. Although statistical evidence as to the magnitude of this problem for landless rural women is not available, recent studies maintain that rural women are systematically denied access to land and direct control over other means of production.

Credit. The most problematic aspect of women's constrained land rights is with regard to access to credit and membership in rural organizations. Rural women's limited access to land, together with their limited incomes, lack of collateral and lack of information constrain their access to almost all forms of credit. The assumption that loans must generate sufficient returns for repayments eliminates the possibility of credit for the subsistence sector.

Technical assistance. Since rural women have limited access to land and credit, they consequently they have limited access to technical assistance. Indeed, there is a strong link between technical assistance and supervised credit.[8] One of the most important aspects of technical assistance is its role in training. Few development programmes have been geared specifically to rural women. Moreover, it has been the custom for training to focus on women's traditional types of work, excluding women from technical training which would help them to contribute effectively to production and development.

Women's membership in rural organizations

There are no laws or regulations that explicitly exclude women from farmers' organizations. However, given their constraints on other productive resources and tradition, women's membership in rural organizations is limited.

Recommendations

- For development to proceed on a sound basis, rural women must be brought fully into the production process;
- Technical training programmes need to reorient their objectives and methodologies towards rural women;
- Women's access to agricultural resources, particularly land and credit, should be improved through means of

facilitating women's participation in user groups and credit schemes;

- More women in decision-making positions are needed together with gender sensitization training for planners, policy makers and researchers in agricultural issues;
- There is also a need to establish a mechanism to implement prevailing legislation in regard to land rights and to ensure equal access to land titles for both women and men, and particularly for female-headed households.

Peru

Agriculture

Agriculture is an important sector of the Peruvian economy. Although agriculture accounted for only 13.2 per cent of gross domestic product in 1992[9] and has slowly declined over the years, about 33 per cent of the labour force is employed in agriculture. Recent government measures for the agricultural sector include:

(a) Elimination of controls on food prices, inputs and interest rates;

(b) Legal institutional and market reforms, including the elimination of state agricultural marketing enterprises and the Agrarian Bank;

(c) The liberalization of the land market.

Role of women in agriculture

The percentage of women in rural areas decreased from 40.3 per cent in 1972 to 29.2 per cent in 1993.[9] In 1981, 21.1 per cent of the economically active women worked in the agricultural sector. Women's roles differ according to geographic zones. Along the coast women work as agricultural labourers in the cultivation of export crops as well as in food production for the household. In the mountainous areas, where women are increasingly heads of households due to male migration for work or to the armed forces, women participate in the peasant traditional economy. Women receive lower pay than men for equivalent work. A large portion of rural women perform unpaid work in agriculture, especially in providing for household needs.

Women in decision-making positions

In areas affected by political violence, women's participation in rural organizations has increased as a result of male migration. However, women's decision-making roles are limited mainly to positions such as secretary for women's affairs. Although women participated actively in the peasant struggles of the Confederation of Peasants of Peru, they are seldom recognized as farmers in their own right. In the National Agrarian Confederation, women are increasingly playing significant roles, although they are still a minority of members and decision makers. The number of independent peasant women's organizations increased in the 1990s, while in government bodies women comprised only 14.5 per cent of the officials, 27 per cent of the professional staff and 40.2 per cent of the technical staff in 1994.[9]

Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women

The Permanent Commission of the Rights of Women and Children of the Ministry of Justice is the office in charge of promoting the rights of women. The Ministry of Agriculture coordinates the Technical Cooperation Network of Support Institutions and Bodies for Rural Women. Its activities include gender sensitization of the public sector, collection of information, support to organizations of women farmers and financial management of small projects. A women's secretariat was created in the National Agrarian Confederation in 1988.

Policy planning

The Technical Cooperation Network of Support Institutions and Bodies for Rural Women, coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, has conducted gender sensitization activities, collected information and assisted organizations of women farmers in the formulation and financial management of small projects.

A project to promote the transfer of technology to peasant communities in the mountainous areas has promoted the participation of women in extension and carried out sensitization workshops for programme and project designers.

A further project was directed to developing gender sensitization tools, training, courses, and workshops for institutions and organizations working with the rural population. Gender is being included as a variable in the design of the second National Agricultural Livestock Census.

Legal and policy reform

In January of 1995 the Ministry of Agriculture organized a workshop with the Unidad de la Mujer Rural in order to identify the necessary steps to be taken to improve

the quality of life in rural areas, and specifically on the means to promote the conditions necessary to ensure women's equal access to and control over productive resources and increased participation in defining strategies.

Access to agricultural resources

Land. Although the Agrarian Reform Law does not exclude women from accessing land, actual female control of land is rarely observed. A combination of administrative, economic and cultural constraints deny most rural women both ownership and effective control. The dual recognition of customary and civil law tends to allow for precedence being given to customary practices that limit rural women's marital and land rights. Women in general have much smaller farms and are faced with a decreasing quality of plots, and thus have an exceptionally difficult task in maintaining levels of output and household food security.

Credit. Women's access to credit is extremely limited. Rural women's limited access to land, together with their limited incomes, lack of collateral and lack of information, constrain their access to almost all forms of credit. Women comprise no more than 15 per cent of the beneficiaries of credit directed to small farmers.[9] In 1992, a law was passed to facilitate rural savings and credit associations. Non-governmental organizations have also promoted revolving funds.

Recommendations

- Statistical information on the specific social and economic characteristics of rural women in their various situations is needed in order to develop strategic goals and objectives and to design projects to benefit rural women;
- Research should be carried out on women's contribution to the national economy, the role of indigenous women in the management of natural resources and the environment, the various aspects of food processing and marketing, the gender division of labour in productive and reproductive tasks, technology to improve women's productivity and incomes and the effects of the crisis, violence and drug trafficking on women's work;
- Gender sensitization and training should be carried out among decision makers and policy makers in economics, agriculture and the social fields;
- Women's access to land, credit and marketing outputs should be improved by facilitating women's participation in user groups and through the promotion of revolving funds and women's credit groups;
- There is also a need to establish a mechanism to implement prevailing legislation in regard to land rights and to ensure equal access to land titles for both women and men, and particularly for female-headed households;
- Training should be provided to a wide range of women and women's groups, including training in financial management, marketing and in project formulation.

Republic of Korea

Agriculture

The Republic of Korea has only 10 per cent of its population in agriculture. The home garden component for domestic greenhouse vegetable production is the dominant activity in the agricultural sector. The economic changes of recent times are a factor in encouraging government policies to increase the number of people to enter the agricultural sector.

Women in agriculture

Major changes in the economy have taken place as a result of the advancement of information age production, creating varied opportunities for the population. Such changes have been accompanied by an increase in the importance of female labour in agriculture. In 1991, the female labour force comprised 45.1 per cent of the agricultural and fisheries workforce, compared to 41.7 per cent in 1970.[10]

According to a survey commissioned by the Office for Rural Development in 1993, rural women employed in agricultural activities worked an average of 12 hours and 58 minutes a day, of which a mere 4 hours were devoted to household management and domestic work. Further, they worked a daily average of 1 hour longer than their husbands.

Because of the lack of new economic opportunities in rural areas, the disintegration of family structure and the aspiration to earn higher incomes, many young, single women have migrated to urban areas. The phenomenon of migration has contributed to an ageing population in the rural areas. In addition, married women in rural areas not only perform household duties, but also farm the land and manage the rural economy. Increasingly, the quantity and quality of women's labour in farming is approaching that of men.

The current economic crisis in the Republic of Korea, similar to the economic implosion suffered by Indonesia,[11] is expected to create a downward trend in the quality of life for Koreans, as food imports to the country may be affected. This situation would have implications on women's role in purchasing food at affordable prices to maintain household food security.

United Republic of Tanzania

Agriculture

Agriculture is the predominant sector of the Tanzanian economy. In 1992 it contributed 62 per cent of the gross domestic product and employed 79.8 per cent of the labour force.[12] One of the major economic objectives of the United Republic of Tanzania is to increase self-sufficiency in food.

The role of women in agriculture

The International Labour Organization estimates that in the mid-1980s women comprised 54 per cent of those economically active in agriculture. Women carry the major responsibility for both subsistence agriculture and domestic work. Time-use studies consistently show that women spend more hours per day than men in both productive and reproductive activities. Decision-making at the household level continues to be male-dominated in all farming-related activities, even in those where women contribute to the majority of the labour. However, joint decision-making is commonplace.

Women in decision-making positions

Women hold only a small percentage of decision-making positions in ministries and government bodies and are particularly under-represented in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development.

Mechanisms for promoting and advancement of women

The Department for Women and Children was established in 1985 in the Ministry of Community Development, Women and Children on the mainland and in 1992 in the President's office in Zanzibar. The objective is to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the women and development policy, specifically addressing the following issues:

(a) Improving women's health;

(b) Increasing women's productivity;

(c) Promoting education and training and identifying strategies for women's economic empowerment;

(d) Advocating the development of gender-sensitive statistics;

(e) Ensuring that women's experiences and concerns are more fully integrated into the planning process.

The Union government Ministry of Agriculture Women in Development Focal Point was established in 1985, with the mandate:

(a) To liaise with regional focal points and other agencies responsible for women in rural development;

(b) To participate in training rural women in agricultural credit schemes and enhancing their entrepreneurial capacities;

(c) To ensure female participation in and benefit from national extension programmes;

(d) To encourage female leadership in agricultural sciences.

The Zanzibar Ministry of Agriculture, Unit for Women and Youth, Office of the Commissioner for Research and Farmers' Education, was established in 1992 with the mandate to promote agricultural, livestock, fishing and forestry activities for women and youth and to impart nutrition education so as to eliminate malnutrition among children.

Accomplishments of the Women in Development units

The main focus has been on activities in the areas of irrigation, food productivity, nutrition, dairy production and support of credit mobilization and agricultural extension.

The constraints encountered by the women in development units are as follows:

(a) Inadequate personnel and finances to carry out substantive analysis and action on agriculture-oriented gender issues;

(b) A top-down planning and administrative approach that does not promote innovative initiatives at the grass-roots level;

(c) Heavy dependence on donor funding.

Access to agricultural resources

Land. There is great disparity between women and men in the size of landholdings, as well as an overall trend

of increasing landlessness and decreasing size of holdings due to population pressure.

Credit. In 1992, women comprised only 15 per cent[12] of the total membership of formal rural savings and credit associations. Women's access to formal financing is limited by the small size of their agricultural enterprises, their high rate of illiteracy, their predominance in the subsistence sector and their lack of land to use as collateral. Women's access to loans has tended to be confined to donor supported special grants.

Many Ministry of Agriculture and donor-funded projects are directed, or have a component, to increase women's access to agricultural resources and services, including animal traction, irrigation, extension, small livestock and small credit schemes.

Women's legal status

Women's civil rights are limited by the existence of a dual legal system which includes statutory, religious and customary laws, where the latter often prevail. In addition, the 1971 Marriage Act includes discriminatory provisions in respect to women's property and inheritance rights.

Legal and policy reform

A Law Reform Commission was established in 1993 which, however, has yet to address the inequalities in succession and inheritance rights. A Land Reform Commission has been established which has noted gender inequality in land rights. The Government has instituted legal literacy radio programmes.

Recommendations

- Formulation of clear policies and strategies on the promotion of women's advancement in agriculture;
- Provision of gender-disaggregated data and baseline information on women's contribution to agriculture;
- Increased research on gender issues in agriculture: women's contribution to the national economy; the various aspects of food processing and marketing; the gender division of labour in productive and reproductive tasks; technology to improve women's productivity and incomes;
- Increased gender-sensitization programmes for policy makers;
- Reorientation of agricultural extension policies towards greater gender sensitivity and the constraints of small farmers;
- Redressing of inequality in land rights ensuring equal access to land titles for both women and men, and particularly for female-headed households;
- Increased access of women to appropriate technology to reduce workload, as well as increased extension and training and improved water supply, irrigation, credit, agricultural inputs and rural associations.

Notes

[1] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Representation in Nigeria Annual Report* (Rome, January-December 1997).

[2] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Rural women and food security: current situation and perspectives" (Rome, 1998).

[3] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Women, agriculture and rural development: a synthesis report of the Africa region" (Rome, 1994).

[4] International Labour Organization/Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (1991).

[5] CEPPI-IICA (1992).

[6] Ministry of Agriculture (Panama, 1994).

[7] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, report of the round table on legal mechanisms to facilitate women's participation in rural development (FAO RLAC DERU/36) (Santiago, 1990).

[8] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "The legal status of women in nineteen Latin American countries" (D/U561E/1/5.94/1000) (Rome, 1994).

[9] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Factsheet: Peru – Women, agriculture and rural development" (Rome, 1994).

[10] Korean Women's Development Institute (Republic of Korea, 1994).

[11] *International Herald Tribune*, 22 May 1998.

[12] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Factsheet: Tanzania – Women, agriculture and rural development" (Rome, 1994).